ANNUAL REPORT 1976

From Louisville to Minneapolis

The 1976 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Minnesota, marked the end of a triennium for the Commission for Black Ministries which was created at the General Convention in Louisville, in 1973. The Minnesota Convention reaffirmed its commitment to the appropriate funds to accomplish its work.

The Commission continues to fulfill a valuable need as well as providing an important forum and resource for Black Episcopalians. It serves as an indispensable channel of communication for Black communicants and churches, and serves as consultant to bishops, dioceses, churches and priests concerning Black Ministries. It also lifts up the concerns and hopes of Black Church people to the larger Church.

Black Episcopalians have contributed much to the Church - and this needs to be made known - and are still contributing much, and want to contribute even more, if given the opportunity to do so. One of the reasons for the Commission's existence is to prepare Blacks for fuller participation in the life and activities of the Church. There are more Blacks serving on key diocesan and national committees, holding more diocesan positions, than ever before in the history of the Church. More Black bishops have been elected in the last decade than at any other time. More predominantly white parishes seem to be interested in or at least willing to interview Blacks for assistantships or rectorships, although there are only a few Black priests serving as rectors of predominantly white congregations. This employment situation raises questions of recruitment of Blacks for the ministry, and also whether the Church really takes equal employment seriously.

It is rather difficult to say with absolute certainty whether we are gaining, losing, or remaining static regarding Blacks in the Church. An educated guess is that we are not adding significant numbers of Blacks to Episcopal Church rolls. We do know, however, that there are approximately 400 Black clergy in the Church which includes parochial, non-parochial and retired persons. There are about the same number of congregations. Blacks number over a

hundred thousand, not counting those in predominantly white or integrated congregations. We should point out that the largest percentage of Black Episcopalians are West Indians or of West Indian decent, which is a startling revelation to us or a little known revelation that we are not really producing Black Americans as communicants.

There are four active Black Bishops and two retired ones. Presently there are 22 seminarians in all of our schools. One Black woman has been ordained priest, two deacons, and others anticipate ordination in 1977. These statistics suggest the crucial need for vigorous recruitment, evangelism and congregational development, if the mission and ministry of the Episcopal Church among Blacks is to be a significant and viable one.

Hence the main focus and emphasis of the Commission has been that of developing and strengthening the local parish. Bishop Richard Martin, Executive for Ministries, Church Center, said to the Annual Meeting of the Union of Black Episcopalians in 1975, at St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina, that the power in the Episcopal Church is not in serving or being on a committee, no matter how important that committee may be, but in the local congregation. We agree with him completely. For it is in the local Church that we nurture and develop committed Christians, develop leadership, inspire religious vocations, and send out missionaries.

To fulfill these purposes and to accomplish the objectives of the Commission the following activities were carried out in 1976.

A. Local Parish Support

1. St. Peter's Church $9,000
   Richmond, Va.
   To assist the parish in its ministry of outreach to the local neighborhood. This is a racially mixed congregation in a predominantly Black Community.

2. St. Monica's Church $12,300
   Washington, D.C.
   To support the continued development of a Senior Citizen's Center, and ministry to the elderly. This project has attracted local government and diocesan funds so that it is self-supporting.

3. St. Andrew's Church $5,000
   Cleveland, Ohio
   Provided seed money to help develop and establish an after school enrichment program.

4. St. George's Church $14,900
   Washington, D.C.
   Provided continued support for the development and expansion of a youth ministry. This project has attracted local diocesan funding, and increased congregational support.

Local Parish Support (con'td)

Should be a model for youth ministry in other areas. Church feels it can now carry this program.

5. St. Ambrose Church $10,000
Raleigh, N.C.

Seed money to develop and establish a Senior Citizens' Day Care Center. This project has been able to attract diocesan as well as government funds.

B. Support of Constituent Groups

1. Union of Black Episcopalians $10,000
Norfolk, Virginia
Provided funds to assist the Union in its work of getting Black Episcopalians more involved in their local congregations and dioceses, organizing and educating Black Deputies for participation in the General Convention activities in 1976.

2. Voorhees College $ 2,500
Denmark, S.C.
Provided funds to enable Voorhees to participate in a student-faculty exchange program with Hobart College, Geneva, N.Y.

3. NAACP $ 1,000
New York, N.Y.
Contributed to the Special Contribution Fund to deal with the Mississippi Emergency.

4. Absalom Jones Theological Institute $ 1,000
Atlanta, Ga.
Co-sponsored a Seminar to help White Clergy serving predominantly Black Congregations to minister more effectively.

5. National Council of Churches $ 1,000
(Faith & Order Commission)
(Black Theology Consultation Project)
To address: Black Church and Black Community, Unity and Education. Provided funds to help sponsor a Black Theology Consultation to evaluate Black Theology.

C. Recruitment and Scholarship $12,000

1. Reginald Blaxton — Episcopal Divinity School
2. George Brandt — Episcopal Divinity School
3. Ira Johnson — General Seminary
4. Michael Marrett — Columbia University
5. Sipo Mzimela — General Seminary
6. Alfred Reid — Boston University
7. Thomas Shepherd — Louisville Presbyterian Seminary
8. Arthur Williams — AJTI
9. Cornelius Wilson — AJTI

C. Recruitment and Scholarship Aid (cont'd)

Several conferences were held during the year for seminarians dealing with subjects and topics of particular concern to them.

D. Christian Education (Curriculum Development from a Black Perspective)

Over the last year all of the content of the proposed curriculum from a black perspective (i.e., the materials selected from the Old Testament and from black history) has been simplified and abridged for use with children. Research was also begun at that time as to how best to use this content to help enable not only an understanding of black theology but also individual and group decision-making, value clarification, a sense of community and corporate responsibility and other subjects which we feel are vital for a people moving with God toward liberation and self-determination.

During the 1975-76 church school season children's materials of the proposed curriculum were tested at St. Barnabas' Church in the Lower Kensington district of Philadelphia. From this testing program we concluded that the content was appropriate for use with inner-city black children. However, we experienced some difficulty in solving one major problem. The educational methods we used required of the children little or no reading ability. The first design, however, did require that the leaders be able to read well and that they devote approximately one - half hour per week to preparation, in addition to the initial training sessions before each unit. We found this expectation to be unrealistic and began testing a second design which, aside from the initial training sessions, involved little advanced preparation on the part of the leaders and which depended heavily on drama to convey the story. This method proved simply to be boring, with extended use of cartoons and other drawings to convey to both leader and children the main points of the session. We have also simplified all directions to the leaders.

Our experience with the children's curriculum is also being utilized with the youth and adult materials. Testing with adult and young adult groups in the Philadelphia area had shown that there was great interest in the curriculum content with this age group, too. However, we felt that simplifying the materials for the leader would make the presentation easier than it had been previously. We are now engaged in that process.

We found that a weekend - long training session for the leadership before each unit is vital for the success of the curriculum. Last year we assembled and began training a group of Episcopal clerical and lay readers interested in enabling religious education from a black perspective in the regions of the country where they live. This year we hope to train these persons to train leaders in their regions to use the curriculum we have been designing and testing. In the meantime we hope to continue testing the curriculum in predominantly white congregations and, through the Joint Educational Development Black Church

Team, in other denominations.

The following is a time-table for completing this project along with the unit to be covered:

Projected Pieces	Final draft to Publisher
unit on values	end of March
unit on decision-making	end of April
unit on community	mid-June
unit on suffering and election	end of June
unit on women	mid-August
unit on faith	end of August
unit on prayer	end of August
training manual	end of December

All of the above units should be completed by December 1977 and ready for publication.

Mrs. Mary Adebonojo serves the Commission as part-time consultant in Christian Education, and Project Director of the Curriculum Development. She represents the Episcopal Church JED, and serves as consultant to parishes, dioceses and provinces.

EPISCOPAL COMMISSION
FOR
BLACK MINISTRIES - 1976

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The Rev. Dr. Paul Washington
Dr. James Russell
Ms. Ann Walton
Dr. Lloyd C. Williams
The Rt. Rev. Harold Wright

PROPOSED AND ACTUAL BUDGET FOR 1976

	PROPOSED	ACTUAL
ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE	$10,000.00	$ 9,728.78
TRAVEL	$15,000.00	$14,606.17
REFERENCE AND RESOURCE MATERIAL	$ 7,000.00	$ 7,000.00
CONFERENCES	$ 8,000.00	$ 7,690.83
RECRUITMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP AID	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT	$70,000.00	$70,000.00
SALARIES	$31,295.00	$28,896.18
PENSION PREMIUMS	$ 5,233.00	$ 5,233.00
SOCIAL SECURITY	$ 570.00	$ 570.00
TOTAL	$157,098.00	$153,724.96